

The Last Civil War Veteran of Indiana Connection to the Present

By: Andrew L. Bresnan ©2015



JOHN C ADAMS
QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

This is a story that I never thought I would write since I live in Illinois. However I had an interesting conversation at a family reunion for my wife Nola's side of the family. The conversation started with questions about my experience at the 150th Anniversary Civil War events that I attended. The 150th events were all interesting and I passed along some of the highlights to the family and even had a few pictures that I shared. After about fifteen minutes of answering questions and sharing information I got a very interesting piece of information and a tie to the Civil War. Nola's Uncle Johnny, who is a retired Presbyterian minister, mentioned that he had been the minister for the last Civil War Veteran of Indiana. Needless to say, I was all ears. I wanted to absorb all I could and it was my turn to ask questions. I asked what year the funeral was and John said that he would have to think on it a while and he wasn't sure of the veteran's name. Just as we were getting ready to leave he thought of the veteran's name, John Christian Adams. All this took place on Memorial Day this year, 2015.

This really sparked my interest to know more. I started doing searches on the internet and was able to come up with some information. What I was really after was a bit illusive, a copy of the obituary. After a few dead ends I finally hit pay dirt. The following information is what I was able to come up with on the last Civil War Veteran of Indiana, John Christian Adams.

“John Christian Adams was born August 17, 1847 at Romney, Hampshire County, Virginia, now West Virginia to Andrew J. and Caroline M. Adams. At the age of 17, Adams joined the 17th West Virginia Volunteer Infantry, Co. C, as a drummer boy for the Union forces. He was mustered in on August 31, 1864, and mustered out on June 30, 1865. He served 10 months. Although not called upon to participate in any of the important battles of the Civil War, he was detailed to carry on the more hazardous guerilla warfare against scattered Confederate soldiers.” (1)

“On April 11, 1876, he married Anna Eliza Masters, and they were the parents of four children: Ella B., Edward B., Anna M., and Caroline M. John and his family lived in West Virginia, probably in the Wheeling area, until sometime after 1880 when they moved to Grant County Indiana (1880, 1900 census). For many years, Mr. Adams worked at the U.S. Glass Company, in Gas City, Indiana as manager of the shipping department.” (1)

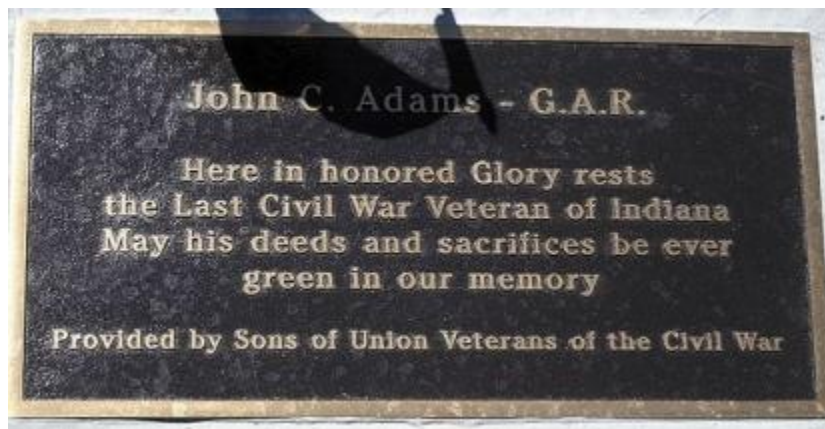
“John was a member of the Magnolia GAR Post No. 409 in Jonesboro, Grant County Indiana and served as Department of Indiana Commander from 1946-1948. In September 1948, at the 82nd National Encampment in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Mr. Adams was elected National Assistant Adjutant General and

Assistant Quartermaster General. All of these positions he held until his death.”
(1)

“John C. Adams passed away on February 17, 1949, in Jonesboro, Indiana at the age of 101 years, and 6 months. Services were held on Sunday, February 20, 1949, at the Jonesboro Presbyterian Church, where he had been a member for 40 years and where he had held the title of Elder Emeritus. Upon his death, President Harry S. Truman sent a wreath. John Adams was laid to rest in Riverside Cemetery, Grant County, Gas City, Indiana.” (1)

The following is a reprint from Newspaper Article Reprinted from the Grant County, IN [Chronicle-Tribune](#)

BY KATIE ALBRIGHT
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An American flag flew freely in the warm spring breeze beside the grave of Pvt. John Christian Adams during a memorial Sunday for the last Union Civil War soldier from the county to die.

A color guard of the Sons of Veterans Reserve and the Marine Corps League of Marion stood in recognition of

the soldier who died in 1949 at 101 years old.

Fife selections, a recitation of The Gettysburg Address and people dressed in attire from the Civil War era all were part of the dedication of a former Jonesboro resident who risked his life to give others freedom.

"I'd like to welcome you all here today to present a bronze plaque in honor of John C. Adams," said Thomas Crawford Jr., past department commander for Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

This organization is formed from the male decedents of those who fought to end slavery, Crawford said.

"I am proud to have two great-grandfathers in the Civil War, and I am proud of the fact that we can honor a Grant County resident who was the last Union soldier and possibly the last living Union soldier in Indiana," he said.

Crawford said Allen Moore, member of Sons, who was instrumental in putting the memorial together, looked high and low for Adams' family to come pay tribute at the memorial.

"He was unsuccessful," Crawford said.

But then he pointed out an audience member who was grinning.

"Lo and behold, one showed up," Crawford said.

Barbara J. Middleton, Greentown, the grand-niece of Adams, was present at the dedication Sunday, but she said, it wasn't easy.

"I had a terribly hard time finding out about this," Middleton said after the ceremony. "No one knew I existed."

Middleton said her husband had heard an announcement on WWKI-100.5 FM about the memorial.

"I called the radio station four times on Friday, trying to find something out," she said.

Middleton finally used the Internet to lead her to information and contacts regarding the memorial.

She said she had attended the funeral when she was 15 years old and had not been back to Gas City again until today.

"I was just so happy to hear about this," she said. "It was a really neat presentation."

Dick Winger, resident of Sweetser and member of Sons, said a ceremony is conducted every year the Sunday before Memorial Day at Estates of Serenity cemetery. Winger's great-great grandfather, Samuel Bechtel, fought in the Civil War and was captured by the Confederates.

He said the celebration always is continued at the site of Adams' grave, and that he was glad to see the plaque dedicated to an influential resident who deserved to be remembered.

"This was a very important tribute," Winger said. He looked at Middleton and smiled.

"You have a very famous relative," he said with a chuckle. (2)

As I mentioned, I really wanted to find a copy of the obituary. Using Facebook I was able to receive a message to contact the Grant County historical Society. After sending an email I received the answer I was wanting. Debbie Ruth of the Marion Public Library-Indiana Room was extremely helpful. Within a matter of minutes I had the information. I received five documents which included four newspaper

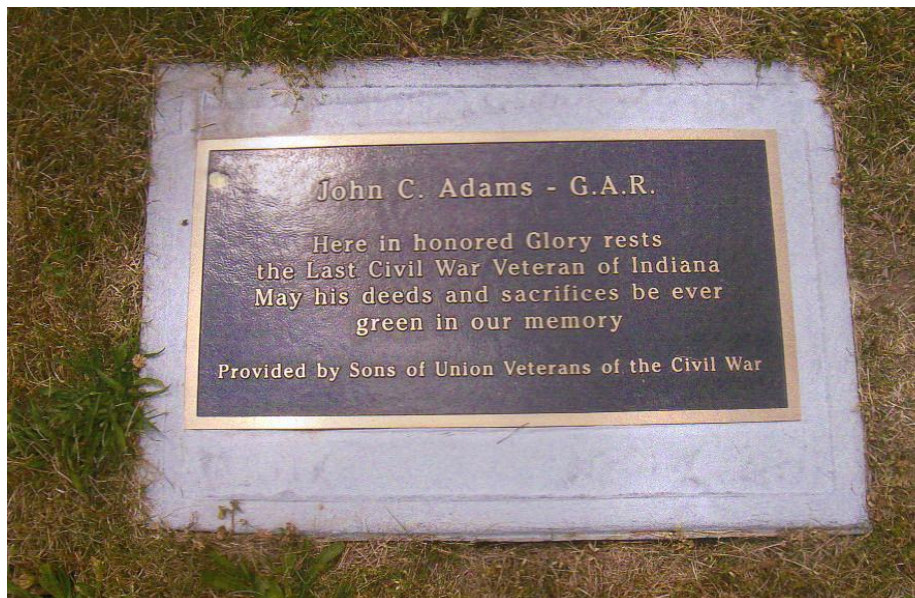
articles and a copy of the memorial card. I was excited to find Uncle Johnny's name mentioned in these articles and on the memorial card.

I called Nola's Uncle John yesterday, June 27, 2015, to tell him what I had found. He was very excited and told me of some of the things he remembered about John C. Adams. He mentioned that Mr. Adams was feeble in his latter years and that he used to help him get around the house. He also remembered that Mr. Adams loved to sit on the porch and talk to the kids in the town that would stop by. Sometimes he talked about the Civil War and other times about his church. Uncle John remembered that Mr. Adams was very devoted to his Church as well as to the community.

Even though the Civil War ended 150 years ago, I found interesting the fact that I was able to talk with a gentleman, John Constant, that had talked with a veteran of the Civil War. He not only talked with him but was his friend and pastor. I am sure there are others alive today that have talked with veterans of the Civil War. 150 years doesn't seem as long ago as it once did. The last Civil War veteran, Walter Williams, died in 1959. There are still a few children of Civil War veterans still alive that heard first hand accounts of the war from their fathers.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/special-features/2014/11/141111-veterans-day-150-anniversary-civil-war-memories/>

I have been an historian for most of my life as well as an educator. I will continue to dig for more information and stay in contact with Uncle John.



JONESBORO, INDIANA
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In Loving Memory of



JOHN C. ADAMS

JOHN C. ADAMS

Sleep soldier in thy silent tomb
'Till resurrection day
When God, the great Commander, calls
Thee from each earthly fray.
Sleep soldier while we offer prayers
For thine eternal soul;
Sleep thou upon the seas of rest --
Not where the billows roll.
Sleep soldier -- answer reveille--
And we'll salute thy name
And gird thee with the chains of love
While bards will give thee fame.

Franklin Lee Stevenson

A Memorial Record

for RELATIVES
and FRIENDS



Born
AUGUST 17, 1847

Passed Away
FEBRUARY 17, 1949

Services
Jonesboro
Presbyterian Church
Sunday, February 20
at two o'clock
Rev. John Constant, Pastor
Assisted by
Rev. James W. Elliott
Officiating
Mrs. Edna Macy, Organist

Member of
Presbyterian Church
G. A. R.

Interment
RIVERSIDE CEMETERY
Gas City, Ind.

ILLNESS IS FATAL TO LAST CIVIL WAR VETERAN IN STATE

Indiana lost the last of its Boys in Blue last night. John Christian Adams, to whom Lincoln, Grant, Lee and Jeff Davis were flesh and blood, not moments in hazy history, died at

7 p. m. Thursday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Maud Stranahan, in Jonesboro. He was 101 years and six months old.

His death leaves Hoosierland with only a memory to link it with the Civil War in which 210,497 of its men fought and thins the ranks of surviving GAR members throughout the nation to 20 weary, gray-haired veterans.

For years a familiar figure at GAR encampments, he was too weary to attend the 1948 meet. However, the six old soldiers who attended the 82nd encampment voted to hold a "final" encampment in Indianapolis this year and elected Adams national adjutant and quartermaster. He was also commander in chief of the department of Indiana.

Many of Grant county's residents learned Civil War history first hand from Adams—learned the intimate, personal events of the fight through the eyes of a drummer boy.

Born in Romney, Hampshire county, Virginia, Aug. 17, 1847 to Andrew and Carolyn Adams, his family had moved to West Virginia when the war broke out. At the age of 16, Adams joined the ranks of the 17th West Virginia Infantry as a drummer boy for the Union forces.

When he relived for others in later years the emotional conflicts of the struggle of brother against brother, he spoke from personal experience. The Adamases from his birthplace in Virginia, one of the strongholds of Confederacy, wore the Confederate grey.

Although his outfit did not take part in any major battle, being principally engaged in scouting, he would recall, when pressed, the wounded and dying and the homesickness of a little drummer boy. Later he was made aid to Col. McDonald.

He would recount the stiffening terror of young men facing their first gunfire and, with the suggestion of a suppressed grin, his own biggest scare.

Encamped on the fringe of battle, he stood sentry. As the night dragged on, something stirred in the underbrush nearby and Drummer Adams called out in a voice that struggled for firmness: "Halt! Halt or I'll shoot!"

~~An enemy mule broke through the brush to peer into the muzzle of the rifle.~~

He would close his impromptu history sessions by showing his most prized possession, his discharge:

"John C. Adams, mustered in Aug. 31, 1864. Mustered out June 30, 1865."

Adams married Anna E. Musters of Wheeling, W. Va., in 1876 in Pennsylvania. Mrs. Adams died in October, 1939.

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ILLNESS

(Continued from page one)

They had two daughters, Mrs. Stranahan, who lived with him; Mrs. Carolyn Theibert, Columbus, O., a son, Edwin B. Adams, Marion, eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

The Adams family moved to Jonesboro some years ago where Adams joined with other Grant county veterans in reliving the Civil War and participating in patriotic events.

Although bedfast since October, Adams' health was fair until a few weeks ago. His mind was alert but his hearing was nearly gone, his speech blurred and he was too feeble to be up and around much. Yesterday he slipped into a coma and doctors told his family he would live only a few hours.

Relatives did not tell him when his friend and fellow Civil War veteran, W. E. Whittinghill, died at the age of 100 six weeks ago in Lebanon, Ind.

He died not knowing he was Indiana's last of a by-gone age.

Jonesboro Loses Last Civil War Veteran

HUNDREDS ATTEND FUNERAL AT RIVERSIDE CEMETRY MILITARY RITES HELD

Jonesboro— One of the largest funerals ever held in Grant County, was that of John Christian Adams, Indiana's last survivor of the Union Veterans of the Civil War, held at the Jonesboro Presbyterian church, where he was a member for many years. The funeral took place at two o'clock.

The many flowers banked about the church was mute testimony of the love and high esteem for the aged veteran. The church was filled to capacity and hundreds were unable to get inside.

Mr. Adams had the distinctive honor of being made Elder Emeritus of the Presbyterian church after serving many years as active Elder, an honor bestowed on very few. He was a faithful attendant at all services as long as his health permitted.

His pastor, the Rev. John Constant, paid high tribute to his outstanding loyalty to the church and his exemplification of the Christian character lived for others to pattern themselves after.

Rev. James Elliot, of Marion College, who supplied the church during World War II when the pastor, Rev. Franklin Bruce was serving as chaplain, also commented on his faithfulness to the church despite his advanced age.

Mrs. Walter Macy was at the organ and Mrs. Dewey Gregg was at the piano. Pallbearers were Legionaries from the Mississinewa Post No. 95.

Adj. General Robinson Hitchcock, representing Governor Schriker; Major Allie Bowell, of Indianapolis, and Rev. Phillip Dermond of Greentown, and who is the American Legion chaplain, attended the services. Two V.F.W. men stood at attention all during the services.

At the grave, Chaplain Dermond gave a prayer and the Mississinewa American Legion fired a salute and taps were sounded.

Several hundred were waiting at the cemetery when the funeral procession arrived.

All afternoon Saturday and Sunday, until time for the services, a continuous procession of friends called at the Raven Funeral home where the body lay in state. Friends came from Chicago, Dayton, Columbus, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Elkhart, Muncie, Anderson, Dunkirk, Kokomo, Liberty, Wilkinson, Selma and many other cities and states.

Among those that survive him are; Mrs. Maud Stransham, who lived with her father for the past several years; Edwin B. Adams of Marion and Mrs. Lester Thelbert of Columbus, Ohio. Also eight grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

THURSDAY---24 FEBRUARY 1949

LAST SURVIVOR OF CIVIL WAR LAID TO REST

Flags at American Legion headquarters were at half mast Saturday.

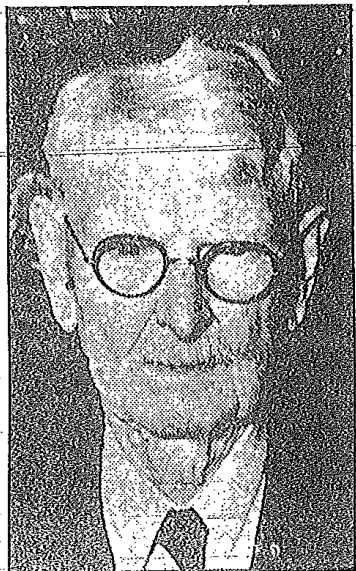
John C. Adams, 101, Jonesboro, had responded to "taps."

After a long illness, the last known survivor of the Civil War residing in Indiana, joined the bivouac of the hosts of those who wore the blue while preserving the union of the states.

Patriotic organizations participated in the last rites Saturday afternoon. Burial was in Riverside cemetery, not far from the place where the distinguished veteran had received the respect due his character and position. Full military honors were paid at the funeral.

Two daughters, a son, eight grand children and nine great grand children, survive. Death came as the last member of the Indiana G. A. R. made his home with Mrs. Maud Stranahan, his daughter.

Full Military Rites Set For John C. Adams



JOHN C. ADAMS

Jonesboro, Ind., Feb. 18—Taps for John Christian Adams, Indiana's last civil war veteran, will sound here Sunday when full military rites are held for the one-hundred and one-year old veteran. Adams died at 7 p.m. Thursday at the home of a daughter, Mrs. Maud Stranahan, who resides here.

Adams was the last of Indiana's 210,497 "boys in blue" and his death left only 20 survivors of the war between the states in this country.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Presbyterian church, after which a funeral procession of the family, mourners and members of patriotic organizations will go to Riverside cemetery for graveside rites and burial.

The Rev. John Constant will conduct services, and he will be assisted by the Rev. James W. Elliott. The American Legion will conduct the military ceremonies, and other organizations scheduled to attend services are the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Daughters of Union Veterans, Women's Relief Corps, Grand Army of the Republic auxiliary and Spanish American War Veterans.

The body was taken to 911 South Washington, Marion, where it will remain until 1 p.m. Saturday, when it will be taken to 510 South Main street here, to remain until time for services.

For many years the Grant county veteran was a familiar figure at GAR encampments, but was unable to attend in 1948. Those veterans in attendance, however, decided to hold the eighty-second and final encampment this year at Indianapolis, and elected Adams national adjutant and quartermaster. He also was commander in chief of the Indiana department.

Grant county residents learned history of the Civil War from Adams, but it was the intimate and personal side of the soldier's life as seen through the eyes of a sixteen year-old drummer boy of the Seventeenth West Virginia Infantry.

When he told of the battles of brother against brother during the conflict, he spoke from personal experience. He was born Aug. 17, 1847 at Romney in Hampshire county, Virginia, and the Adamses still residing in that area at the outbreak of the war wore confederate gray while he fought with the Union troops.

The impromptu history sessions always closed with a display of Adams most prized possession, the discharge which read:

"John C. Adams, mustered in Aug. 31, 1864. Mustered out June 30, 1865."

Death came quietly to the old soldier who had seen his comrades die painfully and horribly in the dirt and grime of war. He slipped into a coma Thursday and died a few hours later. He had been bedfast since last October, but his mind was still clear although his hearing was failing.

Adams did not know he was the only remaining Civil War veteran in the state. Relatives did not inform him of the death of his friend, W. E. Whittinghill, another veteran who died six weeks ago at Lebanon at the age of 100.

Adams was married to Anna E. Masters of Wheeling, West Va., in 1876 in Pennsylvania. Mrs. Adams died in 1939. Survivors include two daughters, Mrs. Stranahan and Mrs. Carolyn Thiebert, Columbus, O., one son, Edwin B. Adams, Marion; eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.



Rev. John Constant
Nola's Uncle Johnny

1. Tim Beckman, <http://suvvw.org/in/JCAdams.html> June 28, 2015.
2. Albright, Katie, Grant County, IN [Chronicle-Tribune](#), May 22, 2006.
<http://suvvw.org/in/JCAdams.html> June 28, 2015.
3. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=14346581> June 28, 2015
4. Debbie Ruth Marion Public Library-Indiana Room